

Message Text

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SUBJECT: VIEW OF JAPAN SEAMEN'S UNION LEADERS ON FISHERY ISSUES

REF: TOKYO 10784

SUMMARY: EMBASSY DISCUSSIONS WITH JAPAN SEAMEN'S UNION LEADERS, SOME OF WHOM EXPECT VISIT US SOON, ESTABLISHED THAT THEY SEE AS THEIR PRINCIPAL TASK DEFENSE OF INTERESTS OF WORKERS WHOSE JOBS WILL BE ELIMINATED AS THE FISHING INDUSTRY MOVES TOWARD ESTABLISHING JOINT VENTURES WITH COASTAL STATES AND INCREASING IMPORTS. THE UNION, WHICH ESTIMATES THAT THE U.S. 200-MILE COASTAL FISHERY ZONE PROVIDES 45,000 JOBS FOR JAPANESE, IS RESISTING LAY-OFFS, SEEKING GOVERNMENT BENEFITS FOR SURPLUS WORKERS, AND LOBBYING FOR PROTECTIONIST POLICIES TOWARD JAPAN'S COASTAL FISHING INDUSTRY. THE UNION IS TROUBLED BY COMMUNIST PENETRATION AND A PRO-SOVIET TREND STEMMING, THE OFFICIALS BELIEVE, FROM THE PERCEPTION OF THE MEMBERS THAT THE SOVIETS ARE HANDLING JAPAN'S FISHERY INTERESTS IN A MORE SENSITIVE MANNER THAN THE US. END SUMMARY.

1. ON JULY 21 EMBOFF DISCUSSED NEW U.S. FISHERY LAW WITH
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FOUR REPRESENTATIVES OF ALL JAPAN SEAMEN'S UNION ("KAIIN"),

INCLUDING BOARD MEMBERS KIHATA AND FUTAMI. FUTAMI, WHO WILL VISIT U.S. END OF JULY WITH KAIIN DELEGATION (SEE REFTEL) SAID THAT KAIIN, WHICH INCLUDES 40,000 FISHERMEN AMONG ITS 140,000 MEMBERS, ESTIMATES THAT THERE ARE PRESENTLY ABOUT 20,000 CREW MEMBERS ABOARD JAPANESE VESSELS FISHING IN THE U.S. 200-MILE ZONE. KAIIN ESTIMATES INDICATE THAT ON-SHORE JOBS IN PROCESSING PLANTS AND OTHER ACTIVITIES RELATED TO JAPAN'S PELAGIC FISHERIES OUTNUMBER SEABOARD JOBS BY ABOUT ONE QUARTER. THUS, FOR JAPAN, THE U.S. FISHERY CONSERVATION ZONE REPRESENTS 45,000 JOBS AND, INCLUDING FAMILY MEMBERS, THE LIVELIHOOD OF 150,000 PEOPLE.

2. LABOR IS CONCERNED, THE UNION OFFICIALS STRESSED, THAT IN ADJUSTING TO THE 200-MILE ERA, THE FISHING INDUSTRY IS MOVING TOWARD ESTABLISHING JOINT VENTURES WITH COASTAL STATES AND INCREASING IMPORTS OF FISHERY PRODUCTS. THESE APPROACHES, THE UNION EXECUTIVES OBSERVED, ARE HELPFUL IN SECURING SUPPLIES, MAINTAINING BUSINESS VOLUME FOR THE FISHERY COMPANIES, AND PROVIDING JOBS FOR WHITE COLLAR AND TECHNICAL WORKERS BUT IMPOSE THE WHOLE BURDEN OF ADJUSTMENT ON THE ORDINARY WORKERS ABOARD SHIP AND ON-SHORE. THUS THE TOP PRIORITIES OF KAIIN ARE TO KEEP THE PRESSURE ON EMPLOYERS TO RETAIN WORKERS WHOSE JOBS HAVE BEEN ELIMINATED AND, FAILING THIS, TO OBTAIN SPECIAL GOVERNMENT BENEFITS FOR THEM SUCH AS THOSE RECENTLY ENACTED FOR WHALERS WHO WERE NOT TRANSFERRED TO JAPAN JOINT WHALING CORPORATION WHEN IT WAS FORMED VIA CONSOLIDATION OF THE WHALING DIVISIONS OF THE MAJOR FISHING COMPANIES.

3. OVER THE LONGER TERM, KAIIN, WHICH REPRESENTS MANY COASTAL FISHERMEN, PLANS TO CAMPAIGN FOR POLICIES TO PROTECT AND SUBSIDIZE THE COASTAL FISHING INDUSTRY IN A MANNER SIMILAR TO JAPAN'S PRESENT AGRICULTURAL POLICY. THE UNION OFFICIALS EXPRESSED BITTERNESS TOWARD THE LARGE GENERAL TRADING FIRMS AND SUPER MARKET CHAINS WHICH ARE AGGRESSIVELY EXPANDING IMPORTS OF FISHERY PRODUCTS AND SAID THEY WILL SEEK PROTECTION FROM IMPORTS IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN THE LEVEL OF SELF-SUFFICIENCY IN MARINE PRODUCTS NECESSARY FOR NATIONAL SECURITY.

4. ANOTHER MAJOR CONCERN OF KAIIN, THE LEADERS SAID, IS THE DRIFT OF THE MEMBERSHIP TOWARD AN INCREASINGLY FRIENDLY VIEW OF THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SOVIET UNION (SEE REFTEL), WHICH CURRENTLY IS SHOWING MORE FLEXIBILITY THAN THE U.S. ON FISHERY MATTERS. THE OFFICIALS CITED, FOR EXAMPLE, THE USSR'S OPENING OF NEW FISHING AREAS TO THE JAPANESE WHEN IT CLOSED THE WEST KAMCHATKA CRAB FISHING GROUNDS. KAIIN EXECUTIVES DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THE SOVIETS CAN BE DEPENDED ON TO PROVIDE JAPANESE FISHERMEN WITH A STABLE LIVELIHOOD. THE UNION LEADERS BELIEVE THAT IF FACED WITH BOTH A FOREIGN EXCHANGE PINCH AND A CROP FAILURE, THE SOVIETS WILL EXPEL JAPANESE FISHING

VESSELS FROM THEIR COASTAL AREAS RATHER THAN IMPORT FOOD TO MAKE UP THE SHORTAGE. THUS THE LEADERSHIP REGARDS THE PRO-SOVIET TREND IN KAIIN AS SHORTSIGHTED. ALSO MOST UNION LEADERS ARE WORRIED THAT COMMUNIST PENETRATION OF KAIIN'S RANKS WILL THREATEN THE SOCIAL STABILITY OF FISHING COMMUNITIES BUT THEY ARE FINDING RESISTANCE TO THESE DEVELOPMENTS A DIFFICULT TASK.

5. SEPARATE CABLE FOLLOWS ON COMPOSITION OF KAIIN DELEGATION TO U.S.
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